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Workers receive emergency food in exchange for labor clearing flood-damaged fields. (WFP/Tom Haskell, 1997)

A series of natural disasters—floods, drought, a typhoon—have struck North Korea in the last three years. The current food stocks have run dry, and the population must rely on foreign aid and imports until the October harvest. Compounding this dire situation is the strict U.S. trade embargo that has made it difficult for farms to obtain the supplies and equipment they need to function.

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ITT98

Social Security vs. Securities

House Speaker Newt Gingrich wants to use most of this year's \$39 million budget surplus to reduce income taxes on the wealthy. President Clinton, however, insists that the Social Security system is in crisis, and that no part of the surplus should be spent on reducing taxes or on new social programs until the solvency of the Social Security is ensured. But Clinton, cleverly, is using a false issue in order to avoid making hard decisions about how to spend the surplus.

As we've pointed out before, the so-called crisis of the Social Security system is illusory. The Social Security Administration (SSA) keeps pushing back the fateful date on which it says the Social Security fund will go dry. Last year, SSA estimated that the system would run out of money in 2020. But this prediction had no sound basis. Just last month, because of strong economic growth, SSA changed doomsday to 2032.

SSA's projections sound so dire because they are based on an estimated annual GDP growth of only 1.49 percent, even though GDP has grown at an annual average of 3.5 percent for the past 75 years. If future growth is anywhere near the average for the 20th century, Social Security will remain solvent indefinitely, without tax increases or benefit cuts.

Make no mistake: The so-called Social Security "reformers" are out to undermine the system, not to save it. That is clear from two major proposals made last month by the National Commission on Retirement Policy, a private group of lawmakers, economists, pension-system experts and businessmen—many of them Friends of Bill—who want to overhaul Social Security. First, the commission called for raising the qualifying retirement age to 70. Second, it proposed that individual retirees invest some of their benefits in the stock market.

The first proposal would impose great hardships on older Americans, especially African-American men, whose life expectancy only recently reached 65, the current qualification age. Congress has already mandated a rise to 67; raising the bar another three years means that the majority of African-American men, after paying a lifetime of Social Security taxes, will die without ever receiving a penny of the

system's benefits.

The second proposal is equally harmful. Under it, millions of investment portfolios would have to be created and workers would make their own decisions about what stocks to buy. The theory here is that the stock market will rise at a greater rate than the interest paid on the special bonds in which the surplus is now supposed to be invested, and will therefore keep the system solvent. But the idea of leaving investment decisions to millions of amateur investors is an invitation to multiple disasters. The main beneficiaries of this system would be the stockbrokers, who, of course, would charge for

managing each account and for every individual transaction. Wall Street would make a killing under such reform, while the average working person would be at the mercy of a market that will not keep rising forever.

Furthermore, this arrangement would destroy the extreme efficiency of the current system, under which administrative costs are less than 1 percent of benefits. The government would have to raise taxes in order to cover the costs of managing the millions of portfolios. Ironically, a small tax increase, all by itself, would keep the current system solvent forever.

Instead of messing up the most successful of all our government programs, we should be improving it. We should keep the retirement age at 65, or even lower it, and increase survivor benefits. We should increase payments under Medicare, increase disability payments and cut the disability waiting period from six months to two. And we

should cut the Social Security tax rate for those who earn less than \$25,000 a year, and raise the cap on contributions to the Social Security fund from the present limit of \$68,400 to \$200,000.

If Clinton means that the budget surplus should be used to strengthen and improve the Social Security system in any of these ways, we would cheer him on. Unfortunately, neither his record nor the declared intentions of his allies point in that direction. His talk about guaranteeing the solvency of the system is disingenuous. By perpetuating a myth of crisis, he is unnecessarily putting a hold on new spending for the many social programs that desperately need expansion, and preparing the way for further cuts in benefits.—J.W.

***The so-called Social
Security "reformers"
are out to undermine
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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. (773) 772-0100. Member: Alternative Press Syndicate.

Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). Call (800) 827-0270.

Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 22, No. 15) went to press on June 1, for newsstand sales June 15-28, 1998.

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Letters

Victims of Success

In "The Working Mother as Fashion Victim" (May 31), Jody Kolodzey raises some good points (although she's not the first person to do so). But she also betrays a bias that is no less slanted than those of the media-created "privileged" working moms she criticizes.

To attack a rich fashion designer with a newborn who can work from home because she can afford domestic help implies that this woman's viewpoint has no value, that she has no right to call herself a "working mother." But "working mother" should apply to any woman, regardless of her income or citizenship, who works and has dependent children.

Rather than criticizing a woman simply for having a successful enough career that she can afford domestic help (what's wrong with a successful woman?), we should dismantle the media machines that create the illusion that this idealized situation is a realistic goal for all of us.

Actually, the real problem is not some b.s. article in *Cosmo*, it's the inequities that permit some of the arrangements cited in the article, like the nanny who could not afford to bring her own children over from her home country and then got fired by her wealthy employers for getting pregnant.

Rebecca Firestone
San Jose, Calif.

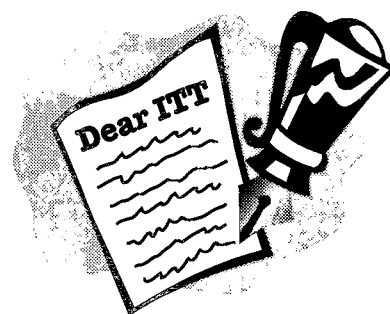
Win or Go Home

I was shocked by Sen. Paul D. Wellstone's speech to the Progressive Chal-

lenge as excerpted in *In These Times* ("Building a Citizen Politics," June 14). It's a carbon copy of Clinton's "Putting People First" cornpone from 1992. If Wellstone isn't going to talk about income inequality, corporate downsizing, the export of American jobs and the stranglehold banks and insurance companies have on most Americans, why should he ask progressives to back him in 2000, let alone organize some undefined future bloc?

As someone who worked for Jerry Brown in 1992, I can assure you that once the primaries start, Wellstone will have to fight for his 20 seconds on Dan Rather. He won't make it with a mushy message. Brown lost, but he went down fighting for campaign finance reform. It would behoove Wellstone to figure out what he's fighting for: If I want a bland pseudo-populist, I can always vote for Richard Gephardt.

Plus, you don't run for president because of a long-term organizing agenda. You either run to win primaries (Brown won Connecticut) or you don't run at all. It is arrogant to ask, as Wellstone has, for support in the primaries and afterward. What has he done to earn either? John McCain has a better record on campaign finance reform. And Wellstone needs to explain his anti-gay voting record and why he helped Clinton gut the Bill of Rights with that demagogic anti-terrorism bill. To me, Wellstone is about as close to Bobby Kennedy's values as he is to Al Gore's.



The progressive movement in this country doesn't need him. He needs us.

Lawrence Richette
Philadelphia

New York Liberals

I was glad to read Doug Ireland's report that the labor movement is seeking its own ballot line in New York ("Labor Aims for the New York Ballot," May 31). But Ireland is wrong when he says that the Liberal Party was "founded in the '40s to support Franklin Roosevelt's re-election."

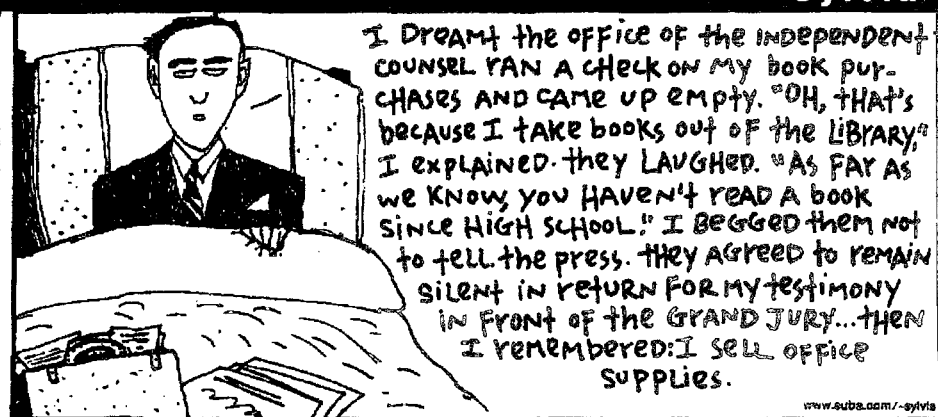
The American Labor Party (ALP) was founded in 1936 in order to let diehard Socialists, who could not bring themselves to vote Democratic, vote for FDR. The Liberal Party was founded in the '40s by garment trade union leaders like David Dubinsky, Alex Rose and Luigi Antonini—the same people who had started the ALP. They did so because a left-wing alliance of the Communist Party and Rep. Vito Marcantonio had wrested control of the ALP from their hands.

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Sylvia



Nuking it Out

BY KALPANA SHARMA

Following India's five nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, thousands of euphoric supporters of the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) planned to spread radioactive sand from the Rajasthan desert all over the country. Fortunately, they were dissuaded.

But the absurdity of this gesture says it all. The BJP, which came to power by appealing to regressive religious sentiments, is now using the quintessential statement of these "modern times" to assert its power.

The nuclear tests by India, followed by at least one test by Pakistan on May 28, have altered security in the region permanently. For years, the world—and the Western powers in particular—assumed that even if India and Pakistan had nuclear capability, they would not build weapons.

So far as India is concerned, the United States and the West failed to assess the seriousness of the BJP promise of "inducting" nuclear weapons when it took office in March as the lead party in a disparate coalition government. The BJP has advocated testing nuclear weapons for the last four decades. To weld together a coalition, the party compromised on three of its major electoral commitments; the nuclear path was the only point on which all the coalition partners agreed.

Within days of assuming office, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee gave the green light to Indian scientists. With most of the preparations already in place, it only required the prime ministerial nod—which two previous prime ministers had refused—to set the tests in motion. Why did the BJP choose this moment to do it? As he flew over the test site on March 20, Vajpayee told the press that the tests were the only way for India "to silence its enemies and to show its strength."

Vajpayee certainly has succeeded in silencing his critics within India. Mem-

bers of the ruling coalition have stayed quiet in the face of overwhelming popular support for the tests. The Congress Party, which ruled India for most of its history, could do nothing but welcome the tests—since the first test was conducted in 1974 when Congress was in power. Only the left parties criticized the tests as "reckless."

But rather than silencing its external enemies, China and Pakistan, which BJP portrays as collaborators in a conspiracy to encircle India, the government has given Pakistan the reason it needed to go public with its nuclear capability. As a result, South Asia has been plunged into a nuclear arms race that could prove disastrous for both countries.

While the BJP will reap some political dividends at home in the short run by playing up the concept of a "Strong India," it has vitiated its improving relations with both Pakistan and China. For the past two and a half years, while India was ruled by a coalition of 13 center and left parties, relations with Pakistan had started to improve. There were suggestions that even the sticky dispute in Kashmir could be discussed. At the civilian level, there were several exchanges, where Indian professionals crossed the border to meet with their Pakistani counterparts. With China, too, diplomatic contact had resumed. In the current war-like situation, the prospects for peace have diminished decidedly.

The BJP presumes that Western approbation will yield political dividends domestically without affecting the economy. But even if economic sanctions do not bite deep, the investment climate will be spoiled. And with the need to allocate ever larger amounts to defense, India could be heading back to the days of low growth and high inflation—a perfect formula for political



AFP PHOTO/JOHN MACDOUGALL

A protest in New Delhi on May 16.

unrest. At the same time, additional expenditures on defense in an escalating arms race will further eat into the budget, already starved of funds for essential developmental expenditures. None of this is good news for the majority of Indians who remain poor and in need of basic necessities.

Domestically, the magic of the moment is already wearing off, and voices of dissent are being heard. The political opposition has been galvanized, peace activists are demonstrating their opposition and leading scientists have issued a statement opposing the tests. Even the urban middle class, which initially supported the decision to test, is now having second thoughts in the face of economic sanctions.

Within a week of the tests, people in New Delhi erected roadblocks to protest the lack of electricity. "You are making bombs," women shouted, "but not giving us water or electricity."

Neither Vajpayee, nor his colleagues, were listening. ■

Kalpana Sharma is an assistant editor of The Hindu, India's second largest English-language daily. She is currently a visiting fellow at The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in Chicago.

Teamster Reformers Regroup Again

BY JANE SLAUGHTER

In a surprise blow to the hopes of Teamster reformers of holding onto leadership of the union, UPS strike leader Ken Hall dropped out of the race for the union's presidency. Immediately, Teamster Vice President Tom Leedham, head of the union's 400,000-member Warehouse Division, announced that he would run for the job.

In protracted negotiations this spring, Leedham, 47, had sought the blessing of his candidacy from the various elements in the reform coalition that had backed former president Ron Carey. But Hall, who is seen as more of a centrist, was able to win wider support. It's still unclear whether Leedham will galvanize all elements of the old Carey forces, or if a third candidate will enter the race.

Early press reports attributed Hall's withdrawal to eye problems that would require surgery. But Hall's secretary says he has not been in the hospital. More likely, quips one union staffer, Hall's retreat was "a medical deferment for lack of vision."

Hall was a reluctant candidate all along. Then, on April 27, a federal election monitor finally announced the results of his investigation into the campaign finances of James P. Hoffa, Hall's opponent. When the monitor permitted Hoffa to run, some local union officials began to abandon Hall. "Ken saw that his base of support was starting to evaporate," says the staffer, an early Hall backer. "Despite the fact that he'd worked with people on the UPS negotiations and felt a warm relationship, these guys said, 'Hey, it's politics, man, I'm going with the winner.'" Hall, a local president in Charleston, W.Va., "didn't have the stomach" to run a campaign that would appeal to the rank and file over the heads of local officials backing Hoffa.

Leedham, principal officer of a 4,000-member Portland, Ore., local,

brings strong credentials to the race. He led a winning 13-week strike against the Fred Meyer supermarket chain in 1994; negotiated the first master agreement in many years with Kroger; and was a leader in dismantling the union's "area conferences," a level of bureaucracy that existed mainly to provide multiple salaries to officials under the

ducted workshops himself for our stewards and activists."

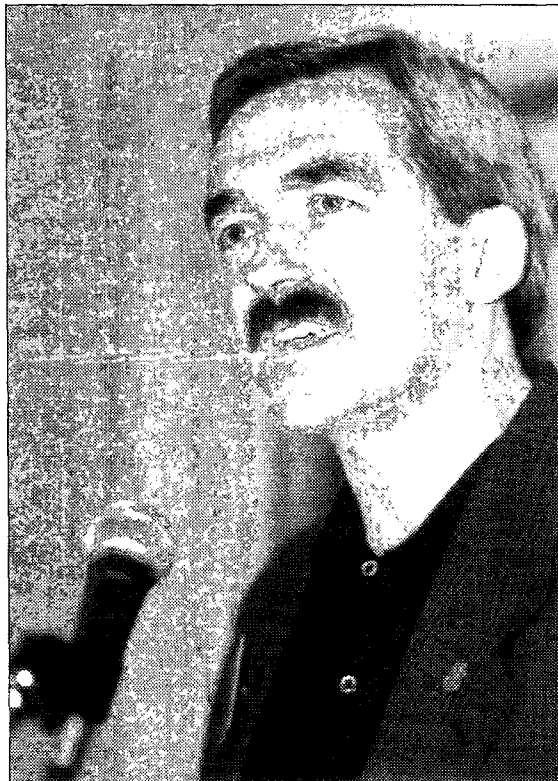
Despite Leedham's qualifications, or perhaps because of them, he will not sit well with some members of the old Carey slate who are unenthusiastic about the bottom-up model promoted by Leedham and TDU. They include several Eastern vice-presidents with big constituencies. As *In These Times* went to press, speculation about possible candidates that these forces might put forward focused on Richard Nelson, head of the union's Freight Division, and Secretary-Treasurer Tom Sever, a dour sort who is no one's idea of an able campaigner. A third possibility is George Cashman, a local president in Boston, who earlier had tried to form a "unity slate" combining Carey and Hoffa backers. TDU nixed the idea then, and Cashman probably would prefer to bide his time until the next election in 1999.

TDU's steering committee was scheduled to meet May 30, with hopes that the wrangling would be sorted out in time for the group to make an endorsement. The worst scenario, of course, would be a

three-way race, in which Hoffa—already the front-runner—would win handily.

The monitor has proposed September 14 as the date for the election. Republicans in Congress are balking at paying the costs of the rerun, although a judge has ruled that these costs are the government's responsibility under the terms of the consent decree that set up the governmental oversight. ■

Jane Slaughter is a labor journalist in Detroit.



Tom Leedham

old regime. He was also the favorite candidate of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), although he is not a member.

Perhaps most important, Leedham has taken seriously the notion of member mobilization, in particular through the Teamsters' "one-on-one," member-to-member program. "Tom has bent over backwards to make sure we had support for our reform programs," says Bob Hasegawa, president of a large Seattle local. "He has come and con-

JIM WEST

Indonesian Uncertainties

BY CRAIG AARON

Following a severe financial crisis, widespread protests for reform and recent violence that left more than 500 people dead, President Suharto of Indonesia quietly stepped down on May 21 after 32 years of autocratic rule. In his place, he installed B.J. Habibie, a long-time crony who has tried to distance himself from the dictator with vague promises of new elections. It's still uncertain who is really calling the shots in Jakarta, let alone who—the military, the elites, the people—will eventually wield power. What lies ahead?

For answers, *In These Times* spoke with Jeffrey Winters, a professor of political economy at Northwestern University who specializes in Southeast Asia. He is the author of *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State* (Cornell, 1996).

In These Times: Is Suharto completely out of the picture at this point?

Jeffrey Winters: The fascinating thing about Suharto is that this is the only case I can think of where you have an intimidating, brutal, oppressive dictator who steals from his population on a massive scale, and then is toppled by a widespread social movement but manages to stay in the country. Why does Suharto feel so safe? Why, despite all of their theft and graft, does his family feel it's safe to stay there? Because the movement that toppled him was not grass roots, it was elitist. That's why he's not on a plane. The movement to overthrow him was satisfied with pushing him out so that they could push themselves in.

ITT: Who is B.J. Habibie?

JW: You notice that when Habibie came to power, there was no dancing in the streets by anybody but the students. The people did not come out and celebrate. They're not stupid. Habibie is try-

ing hard to distinguish himself from Suharto. The problem is that his entire power base was Suharto, and he modeled himself on the patrimony, nepotism and corruption of Suharto. His family has some 80 companies. His family members, until just days ago, were all over the place in Indonesia's political system. So, this is a guy who is trying to change his stripes and say, "I'm not what you think I am." But he is precisely what everyone thinks. Muchtar Pakpahan, the head of the independent trade union, upon his release from prison, immediately demanded that Habibie step down because he's a completely illegitimate leader and a potential jailbird, if anything.

ITT: What role should the IMF play?

JW: Over and over, the IMF was eager to pour good resources after bad to bail out Suharto. Now it is very eager to find a rationalization for jumping back in and providing more resources.



Indonesian students urged Suharto to step down.

We should remember, first, that this is debt being offered, which is going to fall back on the Indonesian people, and, second, it is austerity of the typical IMF sort. If you look, point by point, at the IMF restructuring package, it's not really about addressing some of the fundamental problems that got this country

into a mess in the first place.

ITT: Where does the United States stand in all of this?

JW: The United States was very happy with the rise of Suharto. Then, it set U.S. foreign policy toward Indonesia on auto pilot, and left it there for three decades, paying no attention whatsoever to what Suharto did to his own people. When Suharto began to unravel, the United States was caught by surprise. The United States is in retreat right now, trying to shore up its democratic credentials, when, let's face it, Madeleine Albright made a statement—the first bold statement regarding Suharto—only hours before he fell. That's about as late as it gets.

ITT: What should the United States be doing now?

JW: The United States should be sending a tremendous amount of humanitarian aid, and it should—to the extent possible—channel that aid through non-governmental and independent relief organizations. Channeling anything through the Indonesian government runs a tremendous risk that it will be stolen. The United States also should press for an announcement of an actual election date that's on a reasonable schedule. And one more thing: The United States should demand that all political prisoners be freed. It's a great idea to release all of the prison-

ers, because it leaves lots of room in the prisons for the people who should be in there.

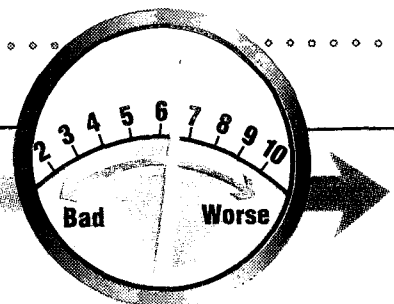
ITT: Are the Indonesian people ready for elections?

The reason that they tore everything down is because there were no other

Continued on page 7

appall-o-meter

BY DAVID FUTRELLE



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Deflated

The stunning success of Viagra has inspired more than a few copycat entrepreneurial ventures. Two of them, thankfully, have been shut down.

In one case, companies selling a mixture of green oats and vitamins under the name "Vaegra" were ordered to pay refunds to customers who bought the pills thinking they were getting the real thing. The companies had advertised the pills by sending letters to older men from something called the "American Urological Clinic."

In another case, a Milwaukee osteopath set up a Web site to sell the real prescription drug to anyone who called and told him they were (a) male,

(b) over the age of 18, and (c) not taking drugs containing nitrous oxide. "Clearly a man who likes to get to the point, he opened his site with a large picture of an erect penis," *USA Today* reports. The doctor was pressured to take the site down by the state's medical licensing board, after it concluded that the site was "not what we considered good medical practice." Since then, the site has been changed. *USA Today* notes that "now, inexplicably, it appears to be a porn site."

All Aboard

A train loaded with surplus napalm left over from the Vietnam War has been cruising the country in search of a resting place for its toxic cargo. Now, the *Wall Street Journal* reports, the small town of Andrews, Texas, is offering to take the napalm—along with the \$27 million government contract to dispose of the stuff. "We've had sulfur leaks all over and gas leaks all over, and from what we've been told, napalm is safer than that," said the president of the Andrews Chamber of Commerce. "As a community, we've

learned not to jump to conclusions about hazardous waste."

Cow Tippling

Searching for a way to recycle spoiled beer, Canada's Molson Breweries has teamed up with researchers from the University of Alberta to feed the beer to cattle. According to Molson Vice President John Hay, the cows in the experimental program are putting on weight and "do seem to like it." Veterinary experts, however, are urging caution. "There are limits on how much beer you can successfully incorporate into a cow's ration," says Jonathan Naylor of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatchewan. "A cow could get drunk if they were given too much." ■

Stunned by a stupid statement?

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Chicago, IL 60647
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Continued from page 6

modes of expression that could be understood by the Suharto regime. But now, the elitists say, the people are not ready, they're too dumb. The elitists are scared to death. Why did members of the parliament stand up and say Suharto should step down? Half of their homes were burned down. That sent a real message.

The fact of the matter is, Indonesia had one free and fair election in its post-World War II history. It was 1955, and it was orderly, well-run and dealt with issues. The people went to the polls in a peaceful manner. Why, if they were ready in 1955, are they not ready in 1998? That's why time is of the essence. Muchtar Pakpahan and all of the others have to push the elections up in time—

6 to 12 months, no more. What do you need to do to get ready for an election? They've gone through the motions enough times to know. All they've got to do is put some content into it.

ITT: *Will the army allow free elections?*

JW: The military needs to send a signal to the international community, because of the financial crisis, that a legitimate, popular-based government is going to come out of this. The business community, in particular, feels that anything short of a legitimate government is inherently unstable. The tolerance is at an end for reimposing another Suharto kind of regime.

ITT: *Who would be the best candidate?*

JW: I think Sri Bintang Pamungkas, who was just released from prison, is the most qualified individual to lead and run a democratic movement in Indonesia. He is a former member of parliament, and is well-educated, Javanese, Muslim and widely respected by intellectuals. But he is also someone who stood up against the Suharto regime while it still had sharp teeth. He ended up in jail because he opposed Suharto. The first statement he made upon coming out of jail—which is something none of the last minute opposition figures have even come close to saying—was, I will begin immediately traveling to hundreds of villages in all of the provinces of the country, campaigning for democracy and change. ■

Press Press

Those #* & @ % * ! Elitists

BY DAVE MULCAHEY

Those of us who criticize the 'bread and circuses' style of today's cultural arena are well used to being told either that we despise the pleasures of the people, or that we do not understand them, or that we would substitute for them some hideous and arcane system of approved Establishment invigilation of public taste," writes Christopher Hitchens of the current craze for "elitist-baiting" in the new issue of *Salmagundi*.

This isn't only a problem of the left. If the May issue of the libertarian magazine *Reason* is any indication, the epithet "elitist" can be bandied from virtually any perch on the political spectrum. *Reason* baits both right-wing virtue buff William Bennett and left-wing culture critic Tom Frank for their haughty disdain of the free market and consumerism.

These days, however, one encounters the word "elitist" most often in debates about mass culture, perhaps revealing an inadequacy of contemporary media theory. Leftists in particular have a lot of difficulty agreeing on just how they ought to react to the mass media's changing nature and growing role in contemporary politics and culture. Few deny the degraded state of television, poll-driven politics, tabloid journalism and the like. Yet they don't feel free to assail these media, either for fear of being perceived as "out of touch" or in the hope that something progressive may be salvaged from them.

Salmagundi sheds light on this ambivalence with a series of articles, including the one by Hitchens, drawn from a lively conference held last year at the New School in New York. The symposium brought together an eclectic group of critics and scholars of the left, including George Steiner, Benjamin Barber and Slavoj Zizek, to discuss two seminal essays by German poet and crit-

ic Hans Magnus Enzensberger. These essays (published in English in 1974 as *The Consciousness Industry*), Hitchens points out, were a "highly prescient and extremely dated" attempt to set leftist media theory aright.

A bitter critic of the technophobic strain in leftism, which regards the media only as a means of coercion and homogenization, Enzensberger argued that the technologies of mass communication could not be controlled absolutely. Decades before the demise of the Soviet bloc, he warned that suppression of the media would lead to industrial regression. And he described the rise of virtual politics long before other critics took note.

On the other hand, Enzensberger maintained a faith in the "reversibility" of mass communications that now seems more unlikely than ever to be borne out. Echoing Bertolt Brecht, he argued that every consumer, every "receiver," could also be a producer or "transmitter." It was a noble idea, yet today, as the global media trusts consolidate their political and cultural power, the left can be permitted a little pessimism.

.....

A laudable attempt to move the left beyond factionalism, though with less than compelling results, is the forum "Liberalism and the Left: Rethinking the Relationship" in the spring issue of

Radical History Review. Here, we're dealing with a lot of bad blood—and the Democratic Leadership Council's sell-out of the New Deal is only the most recent grievance.

At the root of the tension, as Eric Foner puts it, "is the contradiction between liberal universalism"—which claims to speak for the individual rights of all, irrespective of race, sex and other accidents of birth—"and the historical reality of liberal complicity in ... the exclusion of one group or another from participation in citizenship and freedom." It has been quite possible, at one point or another in U.S. history, for good liberals to be slave owners, segregationists or red-baiters.

But, taking that record into consideration, should we conclude along with historian Blanche Wiesen Cook that "liberalism lynched the left"? Well, the left has been lynched to be sure, but to point at "liberals" is problematic, not least because the term, like its counterpart "leftist," is notoriously slippery—contributors to the forum can't even seem to agree on definitions.

Of course, making such distinctions, like settling old scores, shouldn't be the point. As Sara Evans argues, we need to move beyond "the highly moralized languages of both liberalism and the left," and "imagine a vision that can inspire without requiring purity." ■

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israel

Cracking Down on Christians?

BY CHARMAINE SEITZ

Six years ago, Muhammad Bakr defied the Muslim traditions of his Palestinian village by converting to Christianity. As a result, Bakr says, he was jailed last April by the Palestinian Authority for a year and tortured into confessing to false charges. "I am afraid to walk in my village," he says. "I am afraid that someone will kidnap me."

However, human rights groups and Palestinian Christians doubt that Bakr was arrested because of his faith. Instead, they say, Bakr's story is being used by the Israeli government and pro-Israeli Christian groups to stir up international concern about the plight of Christians under the four-year-old Palestinian government.

Bakr's suspicious charges could have serious ramifications. The same religious right groups that have publicized Bakr's story are the strongest advocates for U.S. legislation that would sanction countries that persecute religious minorities. The Freedom From Religious Persecution Act, which was passed in the House by an overwhelming majority on May 14 and will be voted on by the Senate this summer, would establish an office to monitor religious persecution around the world, restrict trade to countries that carry out or ignore religious intolerance and create a special class of asylum for those who are persecuted.

The bill, which targets countries like China, is opposed by the Clinton Administration because it would put religious—particularly Christian—persecution at the top of a human rights hierarchy. Plus, the State Department argues that the legislation would hinder its diplomatic efforts by mandating sanctions.

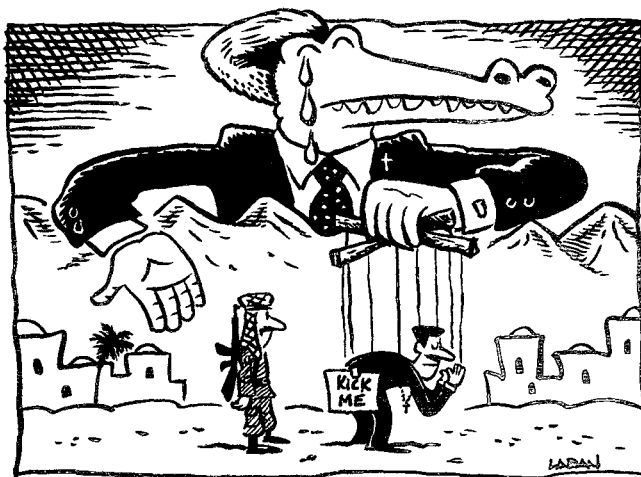
While the Palestinian Authority is not named as an offending government in the bill, it would be subject to its scrutiny, particularly after reports of religious

persecution that have been circulated by Bakr's pastor, David Ortiz, and the Israeli government. They charge that the Palestinian government is systematically arresting and harassing Palestinian Christians.

However, extensive investigations by LAW, a Jerusalem human rights organization, and the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group concluded that Ortiz's claims of systematic police harassment of Christians were unfounded. Palestinian Christian leaders also have denied the charges. While they only make up 2.2 percent of the Palestinian population, Christians have many representatives in high posts of the Palestinian government. "I don't believe for a second that Yasser Arafat or anyone else said, 'Go and attack the Christians,'" says Issa Bajalia, a Palestinian evangelical pastor.

The Netanyahu government has used Bakr's story in its own campaign to delegitimize Palestinian leadership in continuing peace talks. Not long after Bakr's arrest, an Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs report was leaked to the press. It detailed several Palestinian religious conflicts, including Bakr's case, and cited the dwindling numbers of Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Gaza as proof that the Palestinian Authority was hostile to non-Muslims.

Meanwhile, Ortiz, an American Pentecostal minister who moved to an Israeli West Bank settlement in 1989 with the intention of converting Jews and Muslims to Christianity, took Bakr's case back to the United States, where he appeared on Pat Robertson's *700 Club*.



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Soon, legislators connected with the Republican right and the Christian Coalition—like Reps. J.C. Watts (R-Okla.) and Jim Saxton (R-N.J.)—were also talking about the Palestinian Authority's mistreatment of Christians.

The lobbying by Ortiz comes at a crucial time in the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is under increasing pressure from the Clinton administration to concede more territory to Palestinians. In the past, he has used the support of the American Christian right to deflect this pressure. If the Christian right can convince American policy-makers that the Palestinian Authority is persecuting Christians, it could derail Palestinian hopes for more West Bank land or a share of Jerusalem.

The biggest hypocrisy, say some Palestinians, is that hundreds of members of the Islamic opposition have been jailed without charges by the Palestinian Authority at the request of Israel and the United States. "Other people are being put in prison," says Cedar Nuabis of Ramallah, a town on the West Bank. "This religious nerve, when it is touched, it takes priority over all else." ■

Charmaine Seitz is a writer in Jerusalem.

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IRISH EYES ARE SMILING

Ireland Votes for Peace

By Kelly Candaele

BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

It's great to be in Belfast during a week when history is being made," said Bono, leader of the Irish rock band U2 and the best known Irishman in the world, when he came to Belfast for a three-song rock concert and media event a few days before the May 22 vote on the Irish Peace Agreement. Before launching into a particularly heartfelt rendition of John Lennon's "Don't Let Me Down," he brought two men on stage who, he said, "had taken a leap of faith out of the past and into the future."

From opposite ends of the stage came John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the largest nationalist party in Northern Ireland, and David Trimble, head of the dominant unionist group, the Ulster Unionist Party. Hume and Trimble—with Bono between them—shook hands and left without saying a word. The following day, this gesture of reconciliation between political and ideological opponents was plastered across the front page of every newspaper in Ireland and Great Britain, giving a much needed boost to a faltering "Yes" campaign.

Hume and Trimble had been campaigning for weeks in favor of ratifying the "Good Friday" peace agreement, which was negotiated for eight months under the watch of former Maine Sen. George Mitchell and signed April 10. But the con-

cert was the first time the two leaders had appeared together in any forum—a testament to both the caution of the "Yes" campaign and the delicate balancing act that is essential for political survival in Northern Ireland. Here, getting too close to the "other side" can be lethal.

The resulting "Yes" vote of just over 71 percent in Northern Ireland was welcomed as a historic step forward by most political leaders in the North and South—the first step in what will be an ongoing and contentious effort to consolidate peace. The vote sets up a new democratic assembly in the North as well as a "North/South Ministerial Council" that will enhance the role of the Dublin government in certain Northern Irish affairs—a crucial demand of the Northern nationalists. A Council of the Isles will also be established, comprising representatives from the British and Irish governments as well as Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In a simultaneous vote in the Irish Republic, 94 percent of voters agreed to surrender the South's territorial claim on the six northern counties. The principle of consent has been established in both the North and South, assuring unionists that the status of Northern Ireland will change only with the approval of a majority of voters.

Elections to establish the new political assembly will take place on June 25. The assembly, which will legislate on

domestic matters such as education and agriculture, will consist of 108 members elected by proportional representation. All major decisions in the assembly will be made on a cross-community, consensus basis—not a simple majority vote—to keep the unionists from dominating the assembly as they did the previous one before it disbanded in 1972. Since then, the government of Northern Ireland has been run from London, which retains the power to enact justice and security legislation under the new agreement.

A divided Protestant vote on the peace agreement—only 51 percent voted in favor of the referendum—reveals deep fissures that could threaten the stability of the new political body in the North. Unionists, the supporters of continued political union with Great Britain, have a wealth of experience saying no to change in Northern Ireland. In the '70s and '80s, attempts to create political structures that offered a modicum of accommodation to nationalist aspirations succumbed to violent unionist intransigence. In 1974, a power-sharing assembly, set up after the so-called "Sunningdale Agreement," was brought down when the Protestant Ulster Workers Council paralyzed the country with a general strike.

This time it was different. Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party—which generally receives the largest percentage of votes in the North—was on board, and the major Protestant paramilitary groups endorsed the peace agreement. Opinion polls three weeks before election day indicated that only 15 percent of Protestant voters in the North were adamantly opposed, a very small percentage in light of their historical fear of change. But in Northern Ireland, the past clings to the present and won't let go.

Part of that past is embodied in the Rev. Ian Paisley—a Bob-Jones-University-educated evangelical preacher who often confuses his political constituents with his Protestant congregation. One Irish wit has suggested that Paisley is an "immigrant into the 20th century," a comment that would be funnier were it not for Paisley's destructive political influence. His focus on Protestant historical grievances and a keen understanding of Protestant political insecurity generates a voter base that often surprises both his unionist and nationalist opponents. Considered by some observers to be a political anachronism, the 72-year-old Paisley heads up the Democratic Unionist Party and has generated broad populist support in times of political crisis. And for many unionists, this referendum was a big-time crisis.

Four days before the election, Paisley met in Omagh with the local Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal organization best known for its provocative parades through Catholic neighborhoods during the summer "marching season." His speech was vintage Paisley—a bellowing Talmudic dissection of the peace document, which he had no part in creating since his Democratic Unionist Party sat out the "all party" talks. He argued that the document was "stamped with the words of murderers and liars" and suggested to the supportive crowd that they were being "sold like cattle on the hoof to the enemies of Ulster." An "enemy," as far as Paisley is concerned, is anyone who would disturb the status quo.

President Clinton, who played a crucial role in pushing the

negotiators forward in the last hours, took a beating as well. In a comment Paisley repeated at virtually every stop in his campaign against the agreement, he said, to the prurient amusement of the audience, "If Clinton comes here we will have to lock up all of our women." Clinton was in Birmingham, England, at the G-8 economic summit but stayed away from Northern Ireland for fear of antagonizing an already insecure electorate.

At an anti-referendum march in Lurgan, a Protestant stronghold south of Belfast, several marchers also made clear their disdain for Clinton and distrust of American "interference" in Northern Irish affairs. "Clinton would not be welcome here," said Grahme Jardin, a 24-year-old student, "because he only listens to Ted Kennedy and that lot."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair traveled to Northern Ireland three times in the two weeks before the election to reassure unionists that the link with Great Britain was safe as long as the majority of people in Northern Ireland desired it. He also said he would initiate legislation in Parliament to strengthen provisions in the agreement to keep anyone associated with paramilitary activity out of the new assembly.

While Trimble tried to explain at campaign stops how arcane "constitutional changes in the agreement secured the union with Great Britain," the "No" campaign held the advantage of a simple and visceral message: "Keep terrorists out of government." They were referring, of course, to Sinn Fein, the political party aligned with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and its leaders, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness.

It is likely that Adams and McGuinness will become ministers in the Northern Irish Executive Committee after the June 25 elections. The thought of Adams running part of the government makes a substantial number of unionists apoplectic. But the alternative to a broad-based political solution is continued war. At a polling station in East Belfast, a self-described unionist voter said, "Ian Paisley doesn't speak for all Protestants here, and when it comes right down to it, he doesn't offer a real alternative."

Whatever Adams' tactical missteps, it is clear that he has brought Sinn Fein, and by extension the IRA, out of the political cold with consummate political skill. Sinn Fein will now compete with Hume's SDLP for seats in the Northern Assembly and will attempt to broaden its support in the South, where it holds only one seat in parliament.

Sinn Fein did not even campaign for the referendum, yet 95 percent of Catholic voters in the North voted yes. Sinn Fein was officially "neutral" on the referendum, but at a special conference called on the eve of the referendum, Sinn Fein leaders changed the party's constitution to allow their candidates to enter the new assembly if elected. Entering the assembly, unthinkable to many Sinn Fein activists, was a key victory for Adams and McGuinness.

Over beers at the Telstar pub in working-class Derry, several Sinn Fein supporters reflected on the vote. Gary Donnelly, a young construction worker and veteran of the notorious Maze prison, said he voted no. "This agreement does not face up to the core issue," he said. "There is no declaration of British intent to withdraw. The war will not be over until the British are gone."

At an election-day press conference, Adams said that it was "time to push forward an equality agenda that is essential for pushing the peace process forward." He had to shout to reporters as a British Army helicopter hovered overhead virtually drowning out his voice. It was an appropriate metaphor for the challenge Adams faces in the new assembly. Sinn Fein's "voice" must be heard for dramatic "changes on the ground" to take place, which would further legitimize Sinn Fein's drift into parliamentary politics. At the same time, Sinn Fein has to deliver economic and political gains to a deeply skeptical membership base. Catholics in Northern Ireland are twice as likely to be unemployed as their Protestant counterparts. In addition, most Catholics consider the Royal Ulster Constabulary, a 95-percent-Protestant police force, an oppressive presence in their communities.

Adams welcomed the strong "vote for peace" but added that the political status of the north was still "in limbo," a delicate way of saying that he will continue to push for major reforms. But for the vast majority of people, North and South, limbo is greatly preferable to the war of attrition that has claimed more than 3,000 lives in the past 30 years.

For Hume of the SDLP, the referendum is the culmination of 30 years of tireless, nonviolent political work. With a political base in the Catholic middle class, the SDLP generally takes more than 60 percent of the Catholic vote, a point often overlooked by the American media's focus on Sinn Fein. A "safer" nationalist than Adams, Hume will be the primary intermediary with the unionists. But he must also help keep Adams and McGuinness close to power as they adapt to

the world of high politics.

There are critical issues that were left ambiguous in the peace document and will now have to be dealt with. Trimble, the likely first minister in the new government, has said that decommissioning of arms must take place prior to the establishment of the Executive Committee of Ministers, a gesture of surrender that Sinn Fein and the IRA will never accept without the commensurate demilitarization of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the British Army. Prisoner releases, scheduled to take place within two years, are another highly contentious issue that Trimble is attempting to link to arms surrender.

The June 25 elections could be the most hard-fought and bitter of any in the history of Northern Ireland. Paisley and other anti-treaty unionists have declared war on Trimble and his supporters. If enough Paisley supporters are elected they will attempt to undermine any cooperation with the nationalist community. Then, in early July, the unionist "marching season" begins, characterized by Orange Order parades through Catholic areas. It will be the first crucial test of whether new political arrangements can ameliorate this annual ritualized street conflict.

It's difficult to say whether Northern Ireland has wrenched itself away from the recalcitrant clutch of its bitter history. Previous attempts at reconciliation would always break down somehow. But it's clear that most of the people in Northern Ireland are willing to give this peace a chance. ■

Kelly Candaele has written about Ireland for several national publications. He lives in Los Angeles.

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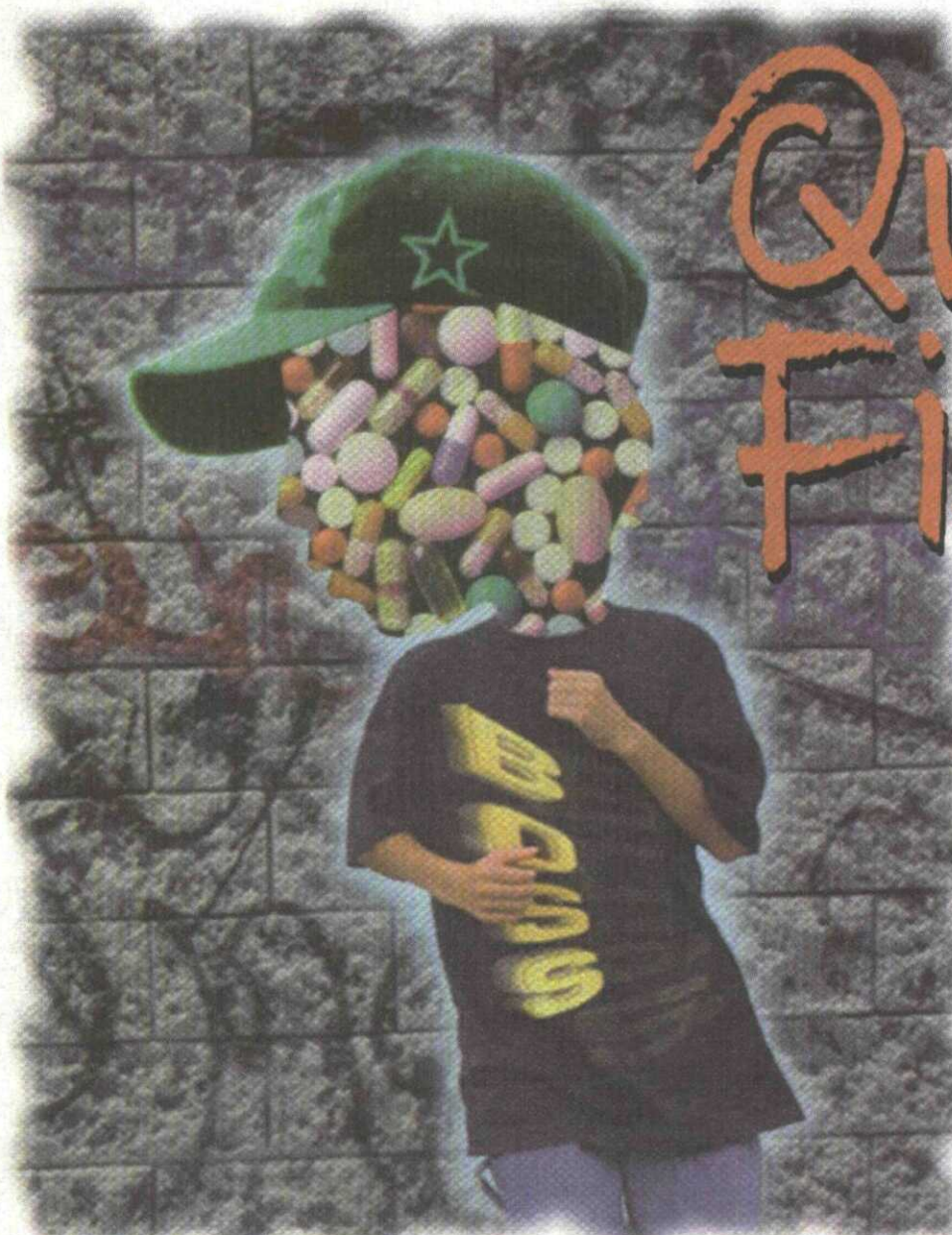
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Quick Fix

Pushing a medical cure for youth violence

By Annette Fuentes

ular diet drug fen-phen. And legal advocates are examining the role of New York City's chief juvenile justice prosecutor in helping one team of researchers gather young subjects. Responding to the out-

Several prestigious New York City medical centers have been experimenting on 6- to 11-year-old boys in an effort to prove that violence, aggression and even criminal behavior are caused by biological factors. One of these studies, first launched in 1992, was still underway in April when patient advocacy groups charged the researchers with violating federal ethics rules, unleashing a torrent of media scrutiny and outrage.

Critics are asking why peer review panels at the New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI), Mount Sinai Medical Center and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), approved the experiments. Serious ethical considerations are raised by the age of the boys, the fact that many were poor minorities, and that the experiments were not designed to provide treatment for an existing illness. Investigators are looking at the researchers' use of fenfluramine, a drug banned last fall by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) when the agency discovered that it had caused heart damage as part of the pop-

cry, Congress held hearings in April on the FDA's role in approving the drug for experiments on children.

But the studies also raise larger questions about the social and political implications of research into the roots of violence that focuses on disenfranchised, inner-city communities. NIMH, the federal agency that funded much of the research, has granted millions of dollars to studies investigating serotonin, the chemical that transmits signals between cells in the brain, and how it is connected to violent behavior. If they discover biological factors that lead to violence in minority boys, the research could inaugurate wholesale drug intervention for youngsters identified as "at-risk" for anti-social behavior. In an era when the government trades its previous commitment to battling poverty for a strategy of battling the impoverished, research that seeks the causes of violence in individuals and their body chemistry has an obvious appeal. If biology, not sociology, can be the predictor of crime, then that could justify clamping down on suspect populations.

The New York City experiments involved one team of psychiatric researchers at NYSPI, part of Columbia University, and another team doing similar research at Queens College and Mount Sinai Medical Center in Manhattan. Several of the researchers had been laboring since 1990 to find a link between behavior and genetics in their sample of urban youth. "The proliferation of violence by youth in our society is reaching epidemic proportions," the NYSPI researchers told reporters in a prepared statement. "Each day we see instances of children committing violent acts against other children and adults, most recently [the schoolyard murders in] Jonesboro, [Ark.]. ... The correlation between serotonin and aggression in children needs to be studied in order to identify children at highest risk for impulsive, aggressive behavior."

The NYSPI researchers, led by Daniel Pine and Gail Wasserman, were trying to prove that their subjects—young brothers of jailed delinquents—were predisposed to criminal behavior because of familial histories of aggressive behavior. In an article published last September in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Pine and Wasserman conclude: "In young boys, aggressive behavior and social circumstances that are conducive to the development of aggressive behavior are positively correlated with a marker of central serotonergic activity."

In other words, kids who grow up around aggression are likely to be aggressive and have low levels of serotonin.

The Queens College/Mount Sinai team was led by Jeffrey Halperin, whose findings were published last October in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry*. Halperin's study also sought to correlate behaviors with serotonin levels in children. Based on a study of boys with aggressive pasts and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), he points to a correlation in his data between aggressive behavior in parents and lower serotonin levels in aggressive boys with ADHD, a psychiatric diagnosis that some researchers believe is a predictor of aggressive behavior in adults. But Halperin says he couldn't determine "the extent to which this association is environmentally and/or genetically transmitted."

In both studies, researchers gave boys one-time doses of fenfluramine to help measure the amount of serotonin in their brains. All the boys had restricted diets for a month and were required to fast for 12 hours prior to the test. They were attached to IVs for up to six hours as blood samples were taken and only allowed to drink water. Halperin's group consisted of 41 boys with ADHD. Twelve of Halperin's subjects on medication for ADHD were required to stop taking it for a month before the test—a procedure known as "a wash-out." Pine and Wasserman followed virtually the same protocols in their two studies, which involved 34 boys in one and 100 in the other.

Many aspects of these experiments raise red flags for those who monitor the ethical implications of medical research on human subjects, but it was the use of fenfluramine that captured media attention. Though one dose of fenfluramine is unlikely to cause permanent heart damage, there is no

research on the drug's effects in children. One study on adults showed that 90 percent of healthy subjects who were given doses of the drug experienced fatigue, headaches, lightheadedness and lack of concentration.

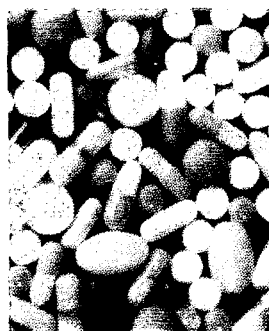
The FDA's director, Dr. Michael Friedman, acknowledges that his agency approved researchers' continued use of fenfluramine on the boys even after the drug had been pulled from the market because it caused heart valve damage in some dieters. But he defended that decision at hearings before the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight in April, saying that in February NYSPI revised the parental consent form to provide warnings about possible harmful side effects. But that was five months after fenfluramine was pulled from the market, and the FDA allowed NYSPI to enroll two more youths in the study before publicity halted it in April.

Researchers at NYSPI also received cooperation from other governmental agencies. Wasserman began assembling subjects in 1991, at first using the New York City Department of Probation to find 6- to 10-year-old boys whose older brothers were incarcerated delinquents. After one month, probation officials balked, deciding that families of the youth might feel coerced into participating.

Wasserman and her colleagues ultimately were aided by Peter Reinhartz, head of the family court unit of the city's law department. Reinhartz reportedly gave the researchers access to family court records, which are supposed to be confidential. His actions are being investigated by the Legal Aid Society. "We've filed a Freedom of Information request to find out which youth were identified," says Jane Spinak, the head of Legal Aid's juvenile rights division. "We think many of them were our clients. We believe their civil rights may have been violated."

Attorneys at Disability Advocates and New York Lawyers in the Public Interest get credit for exposing the experiments. They came across the two studies while doing their own research for an ongoing case against the state Office of Mental Health. That suit challenges the state's practice of permitting research on incapacitated patients—children and adults—at psychiatric facilities, arguing that it violates the patient's right to informed consent. "There are so many angles that are problematic," says Ruth Lowenkron of New York Lawyers in the Public Interest. "To see this kind of non-therapeutic research raises questions about what was told to the parents. How was consent obtained? In the Mount Sinai experiments, kids were taken off their medication. What happened to them?"

When the lawyers found out about the violence research studies in December, they filed a complaint with the Office of Protection from Research Risks (OPRR) at the Department of Health and Human Services. OPRR is the government agency charged with monitoring all medical research involving human and animal subjects to insure that it conforms with federal guidelines on informed consent and safety. Gary Ellis, OPRR head, says his office is investigating four complaints related to the studies, the most recent of which was filed in April. The complaints question whether the children in the studies and their families were adequately informed of the risks of the



experiments and were therefore able to give real informed consent to participate. Ellis says his office will also investigate whether the studies violated government rules against exposing healthy children to potential harm in experiments that offer no therapeutic benefit. For its part, NYSPI asserts that the children in one group were at risk for suicide, so the experiments did offer some promise of helping them. Ellis says his investigation will take up to six months to complete.

A racial component of the research also raises disturbing questions. In one of Pine and Wasserman's experiments, 60 percent of the 34 boys who participated were black, and the other 40 percent Latino. NYSPI insists that the racial/ethnic mix of the boys Pine and Wasserman studied simply reflects the population living around the institute. But for Ronald Walters, a political scientist at the University of Maryland, the New York studies are just a continuation of what started at NIMH in the early '90s. Walters served on a panel appointed by then Health and Human Services secretary Louis Sullivan in 1992 that reviewed government-funded research into violence for potential race bias. Then, as now, Walters and other critics believed such research reflects a widespread view among many whites that black and Latino people are predisposed by biology to commit crimes and violent acts. "Why haven't members of the Black and Hispanic Congressional Caucuses been more concerned with this?" asks Walters. "Black and brown children will be the obvious target in the inner city. This research is a shortcut way to deal with violence."

The experiments in New York were conducted in the shadow of a long-running controversy over the very nature of the research: looking for biological causes for violence in individuals instead of examining social and economic factors. Six years ago, the federal National Institutes of Health was embroiled in a debate over the legitimacy of a five-year plan to study the causes of violence that including looking at genetic and biological factors. Dubbed "the violence initiative," the plan was scuttled after Dr. Frederick Goodwin, then head of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration of NIMH, gave a speech in 1992 in which he compared inner-city males to Rhesus monkeys. A coalition of psychologists and sociologists from predominantly African-American organizations attacked Goodwin's pronouncements and his research agenda. Plans for a national conference on genetics and crime were jettisoned, discussions of the violence initiative became muted and Goodwin was forced to resign his post.

Although Goodwin no longer heads the NIMH agency, research into the genetic and biological roots of aggression has continued. According to a 1993 article in *Science* magazine, NIMH was then funding close to 300 research projects into aggression and violence, many with multiyear grants. Since 1990, Pine, Wasserman and their colleagues have received three grants from NIMH totaling more than \$7 million. Wasserman launched her initial work with a \$1.25 million grant from the private Leon Lowenstein Foundation. Halperin has received nearly \$1 million from NIMH since 1990 for his research. None of the researchers responded to interview requests, but senior researchers at NYSPI defended the studies in an interview published in the April 23 issue of

Nature. Pine told *Nature* that his studies obeyed all federal ethics rules. He called violence "a major public health problem" and criticized his critics for opposing any study of "the relationship between aggression and biology."

The search for a link between ethnicity and violence is not new. The phrenology movement of the late 1800s claimed criminal behavior could be predicted by examining the contours of the human head. Early criminologists and psychologists studied the skulls of juvenile delinquents—mostly Irish immigrant youth back then—in their search for the causes of aggression and anti-social behaviors.

So how real is the link between serotonin levels in the brain and aggressive or violent behavior? In the past decade, psychiatric researchers have developed a fascination with serotonin. Serotonin deficits have been linked to depression and alcoholism, and drugs such as Prozac are designed to raise serotonin levels to inhibit depression. Today, some researchers believe that low levels of serotonin also are responsible for impulsive, even violent behavior. But there is no proof that genetics determine serotonin levels or even that serotonin levels alone are the cause of anything.

Neurobiologist Evan Balaban of the Neurosciences Institute in San Diego is critical of serotonin research like that conducted in New York. He and two colleagues published an article in the October 1996 *Journal of Neurogenetics* that reviewed the findings in 100 studies claiming violent people have very low serotonin levels. They found the studies methodologically suspect and the results inconclusive. While they concurred that biology is important, it is not the sole causative factor. They concluded: "Geneticists and other biologists who are interested in understanding aggressive behavior should take a second look at whether the human and animal literature justifies linking the words 'serotonin' and 'aggression' with the words 'specific relationship.'"

Dr. David Shore, director for clinical research at NIMH, says research into the biological causes of violence and aggression represents a small slice of the work funded by his agency. But Shore says that this kind of research is legitimate. "I don't think data linking violence and serotonin are strange," he says. "There have been studies that have shown all sorts of behavioral problems." Shore defends NIMH's funding of both studies: The researchers not only had to pass the peer review process at their own institutions but survive scrutiny of a panel of NIMH experts. He noted that the panel met in May and that the controversial New York studies were part of its agenda. Halperin's grant, now in its seventh year, is up for renewal, but Shore would not comment on whether the council voted to continue his funding.

Sadly, it has become easier and easier to convince a frightened public that the goal of combating youth crime justifies any means. It has come to the point where NYSPI can boldly declare that the Jonesboro shootings in Arkansas are a justification for violating the integrity of six-year-old boys from Harlem and the Bronx. ■

Annette Fuentes is a 1997-98 Prudential Fellow at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, researching issues on children and the news.

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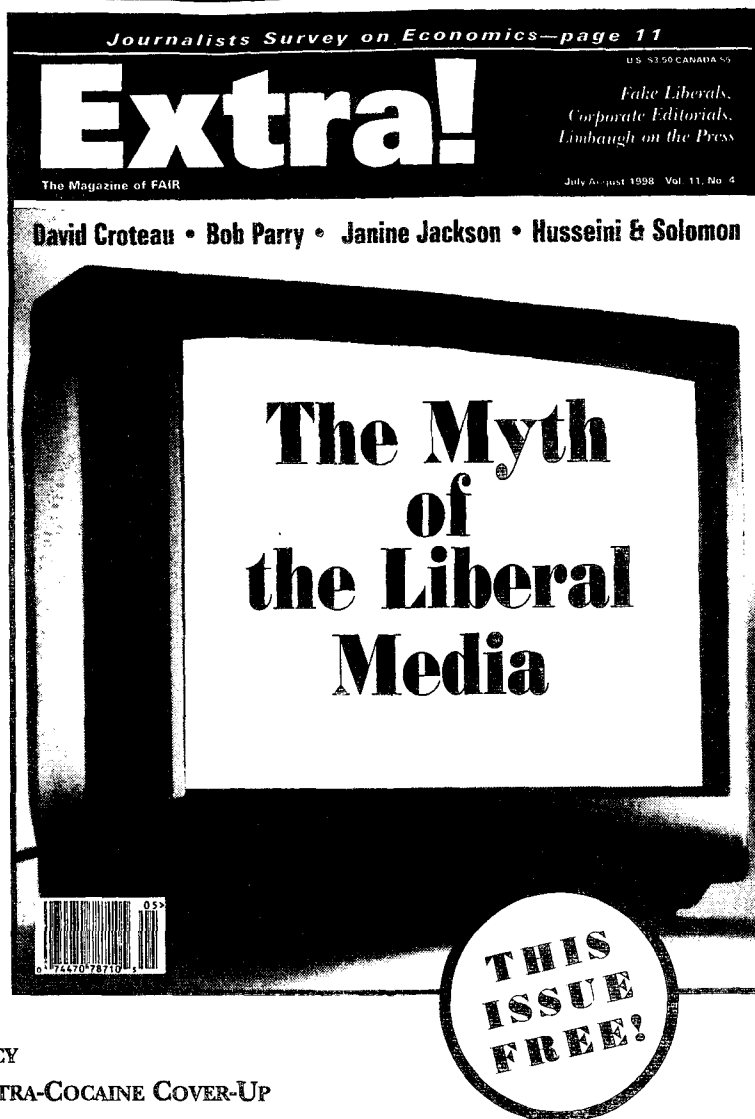
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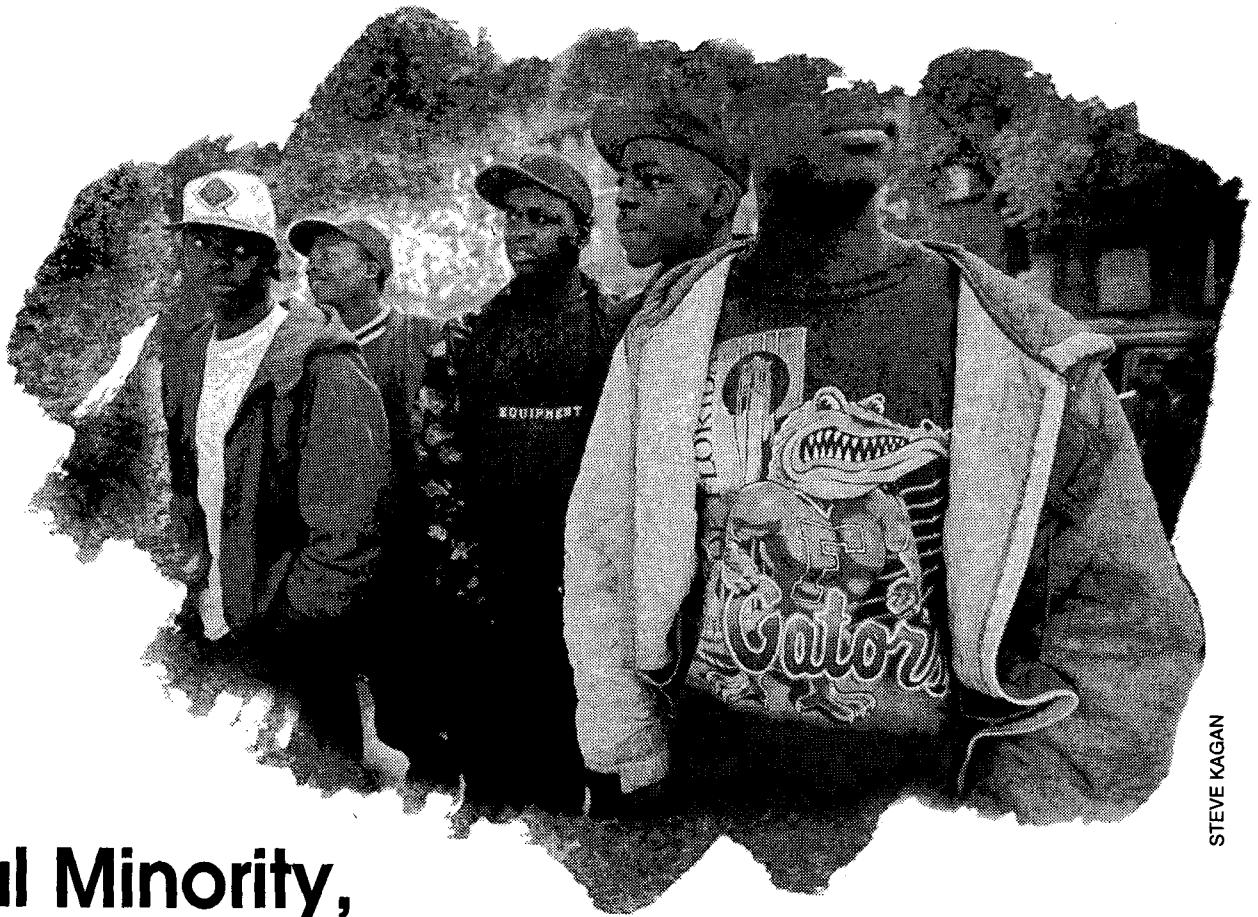
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STEVE KAGAN

Real Minority, Media Majority

T.V. news needs to root out stereotypes about blacks and crime

By **Salim Muwakkil**

Chicago cops have just finished a big drug bust on the city's South Side. Local television crews are on hand, taping young black men, their heads bowed and hands cuffed, as they file into the police wagon. Later in the evening, those images will be shown on all the major television stations, filling up TV screens across the Chicago metropolitan area with the sight of young, black offenders.

Such scenes are par for the course on television news programs in major urban areas. But do these images accurately reflect the problems of race and crime in American cities? A number of recent studies show that the media—especially television—often present commonly held stereotypes about blacks, whites and criminal behavior, rather than the more complicated realities. They do so to the great detriment of the black community—and to race relations in general.

African-American men comprise about 6 percent of the U.S. population, yet they represent 51 percent of the prison population, according to the Sentencing Project. Nearly one-third of all black men in their 20s are under the control of the criminal

justice system. Black Americans are eight times as likely to be incarcerated as are whites. And in 12 states and the District of Columbia, that ratio is more than 10-to-1. Most are in prison for drug possession or other drug-related crimes.

This difference in incarceration rates is no secret. Most Americans are aware of the disparity, and attribute it to black people being more involved in the drug trade than white people. Thus, most Americans would probably be stumped by this question: What percentage of America's drug users are black? According to a 1996 study by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics, 12 percent are black and 70 percent are white—roughly the same as in the population at large.

One reason for this disparate treatment, a number of academics argue, is negative stereotypes projected through the media. William Drummond, a professor of journalism at the University of California-Berkeley, studies how blacks are depicted on television. "News media have taken the lead in equating young African-American males with aggressiveness, lawlessness and violence," he says. "And entertainment media have eagerly taken their cue from journalists." The most com-

mon stereotype, says Drummond, "is that African-American men engage in drug abuse in disproportionate numbers."

In a recent article, Drummond cites data from the 1996 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey showing that only 6 percent of African-Americans have used cocaine even once in their lives, and that the great majority of those—65.5 percent—have tried it 10 times or less. Among white respondents, 10.6 percent had used cocaine. "This is not the impression one gets from watching the evening news or even an episode of a television program like *Cops*," says Drummond.

Why does the media seem to reflect a different notion of reality? For years, television stations have insisted that they are rooting out bias. But old stereotypes die hard, especially those that are useful to reporters as cultural shorthand. When a newscaster describes a community as "gang-ravaged," he or she imparts crucial information without having to bother with details or context. "I'll never forget the time a news director sent a camera crew out to tape some welfare mothers in public housing, and one of our more rebellious black cameramen chose to tape white mothers at one of the city's few integrated public housing projects," recalls Monroe Anderson, community affairs director at WBBM-TV, Chicago's CBS affiliate. "He came back with some shots of white welfare mothers and the news director exploded in anger. He didn't want images of white welfare mothers. He wanted footage that was authenticated by traditional stereotypes."

Of course, racial stereotyping of African-Americans has a long history in the United States, going all the way back to the slave codes. But the association of blackness with crime became most prevalent during and immediately after Reconstruction, when whites re-enslaved blacks under the ruthless system of Jim Crow. The legal system was a crucial component of this process. For example, vagrancy laws in many states allowed blacks to be arrested for the "crime" of being unemployed. "After the Civil War, the crime problem in the South became equated with the 'Negro Problem' as black prisoners began to outnumber white prisoners in all Southern prisons," writes sociologist Shirley Vinning-Brown. "The terms 'slave,' 'Negro' and 'convict' were interchangeable."

By the late 1880s, when the influence of newspapers began to explode, most of the country's prestigious publications routinely projected vile stereotypes of blacks. When historian Rayford Logan surveyed the popular media from 1901 to 1912, he found that many described African-Americans with words like "brutes," "savages," "imbeciles" and "moral degenerates." Even after Jim Crow laws were firmly in place, the media set out on a mission to protect white Americans from what a February 1905 *Boston Evening Transcript* editorial called the "scourge of black crime." Popular entertainment was no less racist. Thomas Dixon's popular 1905 novel, *Clansman*, glorified the Ku Klux Klan and demonized former slaves. A few years later, D.W. Griffith transformed it into a groundbreaking and immensely popular movie, *Birth of a Nation*.

Although such crude expressions of bias are no longer routine fare, seemingly neutral code words have come to embody many of the same racist assumptions. Terms like "gang-related," "drug turf," "crack plague," "crack babies," "welfare

queens" and "inner-city pathologies" impart the same biased message as did the indelicate phrases of the openly racist past. The power of institutional racism lies in its familiarity, normality and indirectness. By popularizing familiar, negative stereotypes, the media become one of the institutions that reinforces racism.

Take, for example, the findings of Children Now, an Oakland, Calif., children's rights organization. Children most often associate positive qualities—financial and academic success, leadership, intelligence—with whites, and associate negative qualities—lawbreaking, financial hardship, laziness, goofy behavior—with minorities, particularly blacks. Children of all races say the news media tend to portray blacks and Latinos more negatively than whites and Asians, particularly when reporting about young people. "You always see black people doing drugs and carrying around drugs, shooting people and stealing things," one white girl told the Children Now researchers.

Amy Jordan, who directs children's television research at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, says that those results are consistent with other research on minorities and television. Minorities, she argues, are also underrepresented in entertainment television, where they are also more likely to be cast as criminals or buffoons, or as having low-class jobs. Television recycles successful formulas, which often are "rooted in stereotypes," Jordan says.

Fortunately, several organizations are working to change U.S. media coverage. San Francisco State University's Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism has compiled a list of recommendations. The center argues that news shows should cover a variety of stories about minorities, not just those related to race, and that they should find out how issues affect different segments of society. Reporters and editors should become more familiar with the communities they cover, expand their Rolodexes to include minorities who can provide authoritative opinions on a variety of subjects, and keep an informal checklist of every story's cultural implications. Meanwhile, newsroom management ought to redefine and expand its concept of what constitutes "news," so that they don't only assign negative stories about minorities.

Most experts on the issue agree that the most important factor is to include more African-Americans and other minorities as editors and other decision-makers. Unfortunately, to that end, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) recently rescinded its goal of achieving parity between the newsrooms and the African-American population by 2000. Although there has been some progress since ASNE made its commitment, a spokesman for the group conceded that the problem is more difficult than it originally anticipated.

The public representation of "blackness" is a distorted one. African-Americans are routinely portrayed as marginal, deviant members of society. The exceptions to these portrayals—and there have been some—have been insufficient to alter the public's perceptions. Our public language on the problems of race and crime makes it difficult to redress these habits of media stereotyping. But if we don't attend to the issue, those problems will just get worse. ■

Monitoring Nike

A change in corporate culture? Or just air?

By David Moberg

Campaigners against sweatshops and the half million workers around the world who make Nike's famous Swoosh-insignia shoes and clothes found cause in mid-May for both celebration and cynicism.

In a speech before the National Press Club, Nike founder and CEO Philip Knight announced plans for the independent monitoring of the contractors who make Nike products around the world. He also promised to make the air quality in Nike factories meet U.S. standards by eliminating the most dangerous solvents, and to raise the minimum age of workers to 18 for shoe factories and 16 for apparel shops. There was, however, no pledge to raise notoriously low wages or to embrace independent unions.

If promises were pennies, Nike workers might already be as rich as Knight, now worth about \$4.5 billion, instead of toiling long hours for \$1 to \$2 a day. The question remains, is Knight playing a public relations game or making real changes?

Though Knight insisted otherwise, Nike clearly was reacting to recurring blows to its image. In the past few years, the company has been the target of campus protests, journalistic exposes, Doonesbury cartoons, a Michael Moore movie, a lawsuit charging that Nike defrauded consumers by pretending to treat its workers fairly, and countless activist newsletters and Web sites.

Nonetheless, Knight's rhetorical commitment to independent monitoring that includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represents a breakthrough. "We've turned a huge conceptual corner," says Jeffrey Ballinger, a former labor rights official in Indonesia. "Now we're not talking about codes of conduct but about monitoring."

Just when independent monitoring of multinational corporations is on the cusp of respectability, however, there is a growing debate among its advocates about how to make it work and what to expect from it.

When campaigns against the labor practices of multinational businesses gained momentum in the early '90s, Nike and other corporations argued that they were not responsible for factories they did not own. Nobody bought that argument. Following the lead of Levi Strauss, Nike issued its first code of conduct in 1992. Today, more than 120 other U.S.-based multinationals have codes.

Nike, like most companies, initially relied on meaningless internal monitoring. Following reports of repeated code violations—like paying workers less than the minimum wage—



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Nike turned to external investigators, such as the big accounting firm, Ernst & Young, and former civil rights leader Andrew Young. Yet as paid agents of the company with little experience evaluating workers rights, their credibility was questionable. Indeed, Young's methodology was so flawed, and his 1997 report so misleading, that it served to discredit him rather than exonerate Nike. The accounting firm concluded that the contractor lived up to Nike's code, but its slipshod report still revealed violations of Vietnamese labor laws, management control of the workers' union, and illegal levels of toxic chemicals, dust and heat in the plant that made workers sick. (Ernst & Young's reports were kept secret until an audit of a Vietnamese plant was leaked to Transnational Resource and Action Center, a San Francisco-based research group.)

Then, late last year, Nike released a report from Dartmouth's Tuck Business School that claimed workers at Vietnamese and Indonesian plants were paid well. But the actual data in the report showed that many Nike workers in Vietnam earned less than the minimum wage, that few had any savings and that all earned less than most other state-owned, foreign or small Vietnamese firms.

It would be hard for any monitoring to be more flawed than these hapless Nike examples. But even Nike's new promise to expand monitoring and to include NGOs, which will then release a "summary" of the results, is fraught with problems. What organizations will be involved? How much freedom will they have? Why won't the full reports be made public?

Corporate codes and monitoring are now reaping widespread attention not because they're a brilliant solution for worker mistreatment but because they fill a void. Most countries in the developing world have weak unions and do not enforce international labor standards or domestic labor law. But consumers in rich countries are beginning to revolt against sweatshop labor. "I truly believe the American con-

sumer does not want to buy products made in abusive conditions," Knight told the Press Club. "The challenge for American industry ... is to give them assurances, and that is why this monitoring thing is so important."

Labor rights groups have argued that local NGOs, such as churches or labor and human rights groups, should be the monitors. These groups know the culture and language, understand labor issues, can be trusted by workers, and are not dependent on corporations. But NGOs in developing countries are typically poorly staffed, ill-funded and lacking the sophistication needed to adequately monitor corporations. (In China, for instance, NGOs hardly exist.)

Instead, it might be best if NGOs remained unabashed workers-rights advocates which did not get enmeshed in monitoring company policies. "I view codes as property of the company," argues Ron Blackwell, director of corporate affairs for the AFL-CIO. "It's their policy to respect certain rights, and it's their responsibility to clean themselves up."

Because independent monitoring is so new, no clear model of how it should be done has emerged. Ballinger, drawing on his work in Indonesia, argues that simply monitoring the workplace legitimizes the idea of workers rights. Medea Benjamin, director of Global Exchange and a leading labor rights advocate, thinks NGOs might best serve as consultants or verifiers of monitoring rather than as monitors themselves. Others, like Mark Levinson, chief economist for UNITE, contend that full public disclosure of how third world contractors operate will do more good than on-site policing. For example, Duke University's new code for its licensed products, which calls for full disclosure of contractor operations, has touched off a wave of campus protest against using sweatshops to make college caps, sweaters and other paraphernalia.

The first independent NGO monitors of a multinational corporation had a hard time deciding what they were supposed to do. In 1995, the National Labor Committee (NLC), a New York-based international labor rights group, sparked a broad popular campaign that forced the Gap to accept independent monitors to track whether a Taiwanese contractor operating in El Salvador complied with its code. "We made it up as we went along," explains Mark Anner, who coordinated the monitors. At times, the monitors were really mediators or intermediaries in disputes. Consequently, some Central American union leaders worry that monitors could usurp the role of unions and help businesses avoid dealing with them.

Yet the US/Guatemala Labor Education Project successfully pressured shirt maker Phillips-Van Heusen to allow Human Rights Watch to investigate claims by a union that was trying to organize the company's plants in Guatemala. The group's report, which largely substantiated the union claims, helped the union to win the first substantive contract in the country's special-export factories.

In Washington, after reaching a tenuous agreement on a code of conduct, the White House Apparel Industry Task Force, a committee of business, labor and human rights groups has been locked in a stalemate over independent monitoring. How intense will the monitoring be? Who will control the

ongoing oversight group? Will monitors report to that body or just to the companies? How will wage levels be judged?

Meanwhile, the nonprofit Council on Economic Priorities (CEP) convened a business, human rights and labor coalition that developed Social Audit 8000. This code is modeled on the widely used international standard—known as ISO 9000—for certifying that factories can meet minimum standards for quality. The CEP spin-off would accredit auditors—most likely the international quality certification firms—that would certify companies as having systems that meet core international labor standards, including the right to organize and work for a living wage. The certified auditors would be strongly encouraged to work with indigenous NGOs.

The CEP approach gives business a clear, comprehensible, universal method of managing the social fallout of global sourcing, and a few firms—including Toys 'R' Us—have already signed on. But the global sweatshop is much more than a technical problem to be resolved by codes and monitors. It is the outgrowth of the cutthroat system of outsourcing the production of shoes, garments, toys and other products to factories that run on powerless, desperate, unorganized workers. "Only when workers are organized to fight back against exploitation will there be a chance to change the practices endemic in the developing world," says Blackwell of the AFL-CIO. "Monitoring is no substitute for independent worker organization."

Yet vigorous, independent monitoring—especially if it involves workers themselves—can open the door to workers exercising their rights. Imaginative organizing and public outrage have put companies like Nike on the defensive. It will take much more of the same to get Phil Knight to announce that he is ordering all of his suppliers to negotiate union contracts with their workers. Then Nike might live up to its own hype. ■

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This Side of Paradise

**Paradise Lost:
California's Experience, America's Future**

By Peter Schrag
The New Press
344 pages, \$25

REVIEWED BY JAMES B. GOODNO



Not too long ago, California represented hope in American public life. The Golden State wasn't a model society, but its people and leaders were, for the most part, trying to construct something better than what they had inherited. Political discourse was focused on questions of how the state could make life better, and most Californians recognized a link between personal prosperity and the advancement of the common good. Thus, the state built an exemplary system of higher education, poured money into infrastructure development and crafted better-than-average civil rights and labor laws.

No more. Over the past 20 years, a mean-spirited pseudo-populism has remade California politics on the basis of frenzied opposition to taxes, racial and ethnic bias, and a disregard for the common good. Using a ballot initiative process gone mad, demagogic political leaders and well-financed activists have created a web of fiscal constraints and mandates that have crippled representative democracy and transferred public funds from services for the poor to the pockets of the affluent. Motivated by fear, prejudice and legitimate concerns about the shortcomings of California's political leadership, a predominantly white, suburban electorate has drawn down the state's accumulated social capital, allowing important public programs

to wither. Meanwhile, the population of California has become increasingly Latino and Asian, and increasingly polarized between rich and poor.

In *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future*, journalist Peter Schrag draws a disturbing comparison between the new California and the elitist, anti-democratic societies of the modern Pacific Rim and our old Deep South. Schrag does an admirable job of telling the ugly tale of California's descent into the political morass, a process he describes as the "Mississippification" of the state. He shows how an aging, white electorate turned its back on the emerging nonwhite plurality, and thus on the future of the state. But he also tells the complex story of how prejudice mingled with legitimate concerns. Property taxes, he argues, did unduly burden moderate-income homeowners, and the absorption of huge numbers of poorly educated immigrants does create special difficulties for California.

Schrag, the long-time editorial page editor of the *Sacramento Bee* and contributing editor to the *American Prospect*, begins his story in the '50s and '60s, when California entered a period of explosive population growth that continues to this day. The first post-war migrants—young, mostly white veterans of war and depression—

demanding the best in public services. Elected officials responded with an unmatched investment in public programs, education and infrastructure, which they funded with a progressive tax structure. Business and the wealthy did not raise serious objections to their tax bills, since they profited from public investment in higher education and infrastructure development.

California's great U-turn came in 1978, when voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 13, a radical anti-property-tax measure that instantly changed the politics and fiscal policies of the state. *Paradise Lost* pivots on that proposition. Schrag describes the events leading to its passage, including the tireless work of right-wing anti-tax activists, the growing frustration of homeowners with rapidly mounting tax bills, the emergence of an anti-growth sensibility that fed both tax rebellion and environmental protection initiatives, and the failure of the state legislature to enact tax reform of its own. Then he explains the political and economic consequences of what remains the "third rail" of California politics.

Proposition 13 immediately slashed property taxes on individuals and corporations, converted scores of politicians to a new anti-tax orthodoxy, and stripped funds from California school districts, municipalities and counties, forcing local

governments to adopt a dramatically new process of governance and budgeting. Nationally, a series of similar tax-cutting initiatives were put on ballots and legislative agendas as the Republican right organized a new pseudo-populist politics around the issue.

As Schrag tells it, the initiative process, a Progressive-era reform originally intended to provide citizens with a way of attacking the political power of entrenched interests, is now dominated by big-money interest groups and savvy political operatives, who sell voters on "quick fix, autopilot remedies" and policies that appeal more to insecurities and prejudices than to reason. Small citizens' groups are virtually locked out of what Schrag and other analysts call the "initiative-industrial complex."

The expansive use of the initiative in California over the past 20 years has been nothing short of stunning. Between 1911 and 1978, voters approved a total of 42 initiatives. Since 1978, 40 initiatives have been approved by the electorate, and each year the questions appearing on the ballot grow more numerous and complex. Since approving Proposition 13, voters have endorsed measures setting a minimum portion of the budget to be spent on education; eliminating affirmative action programs in the public sector; capping increases in spending; making tax increases more difficult; implementing "three strikes" criminal sentencing rules; placing the nation's strictest term limits on legislators; legalizing medical marijuana; creating new parks and more.

The expansion of the initiative process, Schrag contends, provides an illusion of direct democracy while actually undermining the democratic process. State legislatures, he notes, are actually more representative of the population as a whole than are voters. That's because legislative districts are drawn according to population, so that districts with low levels of voter participation (often areas with large Latino and working-class populations) have the same amount of influence as the suburban and rural districts where turnout is high. By limiting the authority of the legislature, non-voters and minorities find it even harder to

make their voices heard.

"Paradoxically," Schrag writes, "the further the initiative process goes, the more difficult and problematic effective citizenship becomes." Every measure makes it that much harder to write budgets, respond to changing needs or set reasonable priorities. As a result, California has "seen the evolution of an increasingly unmanageable and incomprehensible structure of state and local government that exacerbates the same public disaffection and alienation that have brought it on, thus creating a vicious cycle of reform and alienation."

This month, California voters will decide on three measures that illustrate the slippery slopes that have come to define California politics. One initiative, Proposition 226, is styled as an effort to protect workers' rights by requiring unions to receive written approval from individual members before applying dues to political causes. In reality, it is an attack on representative democracy within unions and an attempt to emasculate one of the few vehicles through which moderate-income Californians can influence the state's plebiscitory plutocracy.

A second measure, Proposition 227, would effectively eliminate bilingual education in the state's public school system. Not only does this initiative continue an ugly war on immigrants, but it also strips power from local authorities—in this case school districts—and delivers it to the state government.

Finally, voters face Proposition 223, an initiative that would require 95 percent of school funding to go to the

classroom. While attractive on the surface, the measure would further limit the ability of elected representatives to craft budgets that respond to emerging educational needs in particular schools.

It's no surprise then that hints of a backlash against the initiative process are sprouting. The *San Francisco Chronicle* recently published an extensive look at the role of the initiative in the state's political life. And Democratic legislators are speaking critically about the plebiscitory process. During a recent hearing, for example, Betty Karnett, a labor-backed state senator from Long Beach, spoke strongly against the use of the initiative process as a tool for political revenge and the flood of out-of-state money supporting Proposition 226. Their willingness to speak out is evidence that Schrag's ideas are already having an impact.

Paradise Lost is not without its flaws. Because Schrag covers so much ground, he skims over issues that deserve further attention. For example, a critical discussion of the role of teachers' unions and other public employee unions in state politics raises an important question: What do you do when the particular concerns of public employees collide with the broader public interest? But here, Schrag does not provide the detail he offers on other topics. He raises the issue, provides enough information to convince readers that a problem exists, and moves on without considering the centrality of public employees to a progressive political coalition.

Nevertheless, Schrag has written the most important recent book on California politics and has made a significant contribution to the literature on the future of American politics. As Schrag contends, that future is closely tied to California's. Not only is California the most populous state, but it continues to set a political agenda that resonates elsewhere. And as California leads the nation toward an increasingly multi-ethnic future, that influence will continue to expand. ■

James B. Goodno, a former correspondent for *In These Times*, has written on California politics for the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and other publications.

The initiative process provides an illusion of direct democracy while actually undermining the democratic process.

Horse Races

REVIEWED BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

Bulworth

Directed by Warren Beatty

The Horse Whisperer

Directed by Robert Redford

Warren Beatty and Robert Redford, both larger-than-life auteurs of a certain age (61, since you asked), are now box office rivals. Indeed, Twentieth Century Fox delayed the release of Beatty's new film for a week, out of fear of competing with Redford's most recent picture.

As different as the two men are, they are both major figures of what has become old liberal Hollywood. They both passionately believe that entertainment film can be honorable, important popular art. Swarmed since youth by image-worshippers, they both have strived to be taken seriously. Not content with being mere containers of charisma, both want to leave a mark on public life.

Redford has staked his claim to seriousness as an artist with a social conscience, whether he's making films with an environmentalist's reverence for natural beauty or by producing meaningful mainstream films like *All the President's Men*, *The Candidate* and *Quiz Show*. His humorless earnestness seems to reprove his dazzling charm. Beatty, on the other hand, treats being Warren Beatty as a welcome opportunity to make the world his bully pulpit. Though never a candidate for office, he has backed many a left-liberal political campaign. While his ambitions for his roles and films can exceed his grasp, he always mixes charm and wit with a

socially critical edge.

And both artists can, at this stage in their careers, call the shots on their own productions.

In that light, Redford's *The Horse Whisperer* is appalling. Its inspiration, the best-selling novel by Nicholas Evans, was pulpy but never claimed to be more. The film attempts to transcend trash, but only succeeds in burdening it with pretension. Some of the worst tendencies of Redford's career are on display: his emotional self-protectiveness, taste for high-minded sentimentality and smug hostility to things Eastern and urban.

Metaphors rule here, and they are Godzilla-sized. Out of the uptight East come three wounded creatures: a young girl (Scarlett Johansson) and a horse, both injured and traumatized in a horri-

fic accident, and the girl's mother, also skittish, apparently as a result of a life lived without roots. Mom (Kristin Scott Thomas), a Tina Brown-like figure, puts her high-powered job as a New York magazine editor on hold in order to seek out a "horse whisperer" (Redford), a tamer of horses. With a perpetual far-away look in his eye, he perceives that all three need healing. It's a long process, requiring the maternal ministrations of a real woman (Dianne Wiest, as a farm wife), mashed potatoes, astounding Western mountain vistas and, yes, the power of love.

During the 164 minutes of *The Horse Whisperer*, the camera swoops, loops and cranes around vast Montana landscapes, linking spectacular vistas with the purity and tranquillity of the horse whisperer's soul. This is peace of mind as big as all outdoors. It's the footage I



Warren Beatty tackles national political life in *Bulworth*.

would be looking for were I making a New Age music video.

The wounded slowly heal. But like the landscape, the horse whisperer is eternal—unchanged and unchanging. This is perhaps the single most disturbing thing in this picture-perfect film: a character whose gift appears to transcend human nature altogether. Serenity on this order is enough to make you reach for a martini and a cell phone.

Beatty's *Bulworth*, on the other hand, is part farce and part fairy tale. It's about politics and money and media, but looks nothing like the few other American films that tackle national political life head-on, eschewing the insider gossip of *Primary Colors* and the sly cynicism of *Wag the Dog*. This is a desperate, hysterical scream of a film, about what happens when one can no longer cope with political cynicism.

We first meet Jay Billington Bulworth (Beatty) sobbing alone in his Senate office. Bulworth used to be a boyish, Tom Hayden-like Democrat. Now he's an aging, Clintonesque sell-out—and he can't stand it. After establishing a huge life insurance policy with an insurance industry lobbyist, he arranges his own assassination. Then he returns to his district, finally free to say and do what he'd like to on his last weekend on earth.

Bulworth tells an African-American church-going audience that he'd taken their votes and forgotten about them because they don't ante up enough campaign contributions. He tells Hollywood bigwigs that their movies aren't any good. He abandons white church-goers, and sneaks out for drinking and dancing with some African-American lovelies, including mysterious party-girl Nina (Halle Berry).

Nina is no bimbo, though, as the senator discovers when she gives him a fast-talking analysis of the crisis of African-American leadership. And he doesn't discover that she's his designated killer, even after he changes his mind and decides he wants to live. By that time, he has been taken into her family and community. He has met a drug dealer who cares for a group of kids by giving them jobs selling drugs. And he has faced down a couple of white cops who are menacing the kids on the street. He's

gotten used to the sight of a postmodern seer (poet Amiri Baraka dressed up as a homeless street wit) popping up at the edges of the action.

Already intoxicated from self-starvation, alcohol, sleep deprivation and fear, Bulworth makes his way to a TV debate, where he spouts off in a bizarre, middle-aged white man's version of rap music about everything from welfare to education to free air-time for political candidates. The incongruity is calculatedly scary. It's as if his own manner of speaking has no words to express the outrage, indignity, injustice and craziness of contemporary American politics.

For a brief, insane moment, Bulworth uses borrowed tropes and borrowed words—we hear Nina's and the drug dealer's remarks come back out Bulworth's lips, and we see their astonished reaction—to speak truth to power on national television. The voters love it. The media love it. Even his long-suffering campaign aide begins to love it.

Bulworth doesn't really end, it just blows up with all the pleasures of fireworks. There's something delicious about seeing a master of the mask take it off, whether it's Bulworth or Beatty. And there's something energizing about seeing big lies skewered instead of bemoaned.

There's also a difference between getting high on justifiable outrage and taking political action. *Bulworth* is not a political recipe book or even a political tract. It's a fairy tale of late capitalism,

and it takes the fable's shortcuts to its insights. It shamelessly uses African-Americans to enable the action. In a tired tradition, it puts African-Americans into service as America's spirituality bank and authenticity reservoir. It's an exhausting job educating white people, and in this movie it takes a village—or at least all of Watts—to educate Bulworth.

Bulworth has a mediagenic approach to political life. Bulworth's (and Beatty's) achievement, through his adoption of subcultural speech patterns, is to use his star status to break through the media curtain. The African-Americans feeding him lines have to hope he can get them right, or right enough.

Will *Bulworth* simply deepen entrenched cynicism, or will it incite people to dream and act differently? Beatty has courted opinion-makers and journalists, particularly African-Americans, in an attempt to get the film talked about. The film's impact will also, of course, have to do with Twentieth Century Fox's distribution. After reluctantly agreeing to take the film, Fox has been slow and small with publicity. Its impact will also depend on the will of social action organizations to build on the film's insights.

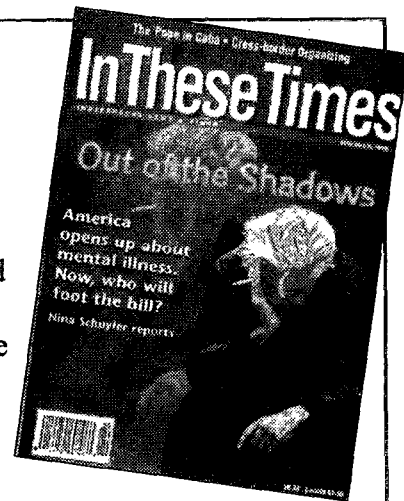
The latest efforts of Beatty and Redford, in wildly different ways, express the midlife crisis of the old liberal era in Hollywood. For all its wide-open spaces, *The Horse Whisperer* feels psychically claustrophobic. Even at its darkest, *Bulworth* creates space for possibility. ■

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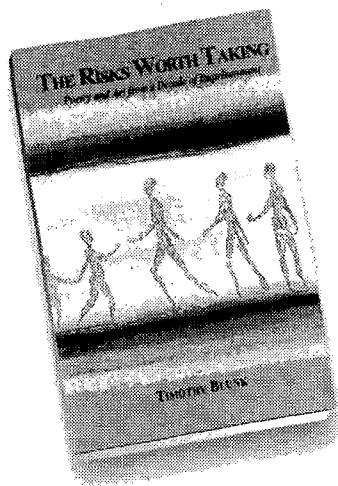


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REVIEWED BY KATIE BERKOWITZ



In 1984, Timothy Blunk was arrested in Cherry Hill, N.J., for the possession of weapons, explosives and false identification. He was sentenced to 54 years in prison, and later implicated in a plot to bomb the U.S. Capitol building to protest the U.S. invasion of Grenada. In prison, Blunk became involved in art and literacy programs. The poetry and visual art he produced during a 13-year stay—he was released on parole last year—is collected in this volume.

Blunk is occasionally a powerful poet, although the emotional force appearing in these works comes less from Blunk's creative use of language than from his stunningly blunt statements about American justice: At his best, he writes op-eds in verse. Take the following ditty:

The true measure
of our generation's progress
(if we've done anything at all)
will be whether
our children's children
will look back upon our time
with the same moral revulsion
we now hold
for the era of chattel slavery.

That's fine as a statement of a worldview, but it's not exactly a poem.

Still, Blunk does have a good ear for language, attempting to merge the thoughts and words of his African-American and Puerto Rican cellmates into his writing. And his style, which draws on the casual form and free

association of the beats, lends itself well to someone with Blunk's sensibilities. His prose poem "Notes from the Inside," for example, does a particularly good job of capturing the multicultural noise of an American prison.

Actually, what's disturbing about this book has less to do with Blunk's competence as a poet than his political worldview. Blunk betrays a cocksure sense that he has always been right about things. He speaks of his Marxism almost as a religion ("We argued for days over those steam kettles or in his cell ... his Great Spirit vs. my Karl Marx"). And despite the highly personal tone of his art, he rarely poses any serious questions about himself.

Take, for instance, his letter to a high-school pen-pal named Bill. When Bill calls him "stupid," Blunk suggests that Bill, too young "to remember what it was like having Ronald Reagan as president," isn't qualified to judge him.

Blunk admits that his plan to "raise the political cost for the government by causing damage to their 'war machine' ... wasn't very effective and ... put innocent people at risk." But in later poems, he justifies himself by saying, repeatedly, that his were "the risks worth taking." That's the mark of a fanatic, someone whose devotion to ideology is so strong that bystanders' lives are just "risks."

It's a shame that Blunk's life—and art—could not have been put to a better use. ■

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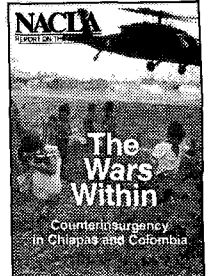
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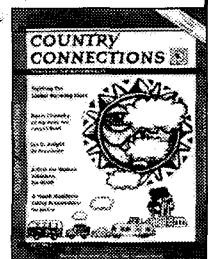


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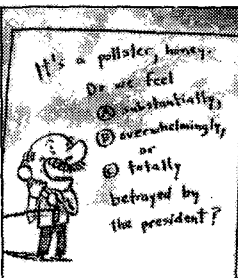
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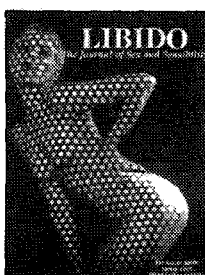


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Continued from page 30

on a signboard announcing a benefit for the 1945 Hollywood strikers.

But other candidates for the title of “quintessentially American radical” abound. Martin Luther King Jr. shares that famous smile with Malcolm X. Tom Paine, firebrand revolutionary pamphleteer, is included along with filmmaker Charlie Chaplin, a target of McCarthyism and, like Paine, a British immigrant. Helen Keller’s socialist politics are now as lost to public memory as those of Theodore Dreiser, author of *An American Tragedy* and, at death, a member of the Communist Party. (*Images* portrays Dreiser reading the *Western Worker*.) Then there are the fleeting and famous: Katherine Hepburn in jaunty radiance at the 1948 Progressive Party convention; Isaac Asimov amidst a boisterous group of radically-inclined New York sci-fi writers in 1938; and Jane Fonda, in better days, addressing a Columbia University anti-war rally in 1972.

After that entourage, who can deny that the radical impulse in politics and culture is every bit as American as Johnny Appleseed? But wait, here *is* Johnny Appleseed, in his earliest known portrayal. As Buhle and Sullivan point out, Appleseed—unlike Daniel Boone, Kit Carson and Paul Bunyan—never butchered the wilderness, killed Indians and Mexicans or symbolized muscular masculinity. He merely told stories, planted trees and preached the mystical doctrines of Immanuel Swedenborg, making him a gentle folk hero fit for the late-20th-century ecological left.

Since sowing seeds was hardly subversive in the agrarian America of the mid-19th century, it may be anachronistic to call Johnny Appleseed a “radical.” But *Images* demonstrates that this sort of creative license is nothing new. As Boardman Robinson’s handsome charcoal drawing of Abraham Lincoln for a 1919 issue of the *Liberator* shows, American radicals were laying a distinctive claim to national mythology long before the Popular Front became fond of the founding fathers.

Buhle and Sullivan have turned up an incredibly diverse and entertaining array of images evoking the American radical past. Louise Bryant, writer and paramour of John Reed, arches languorous and naked on the sands of Cape Cod. Transit Workers Union leader Mike Quill passes a sandwich through a plant window to a sit-down striker. In New York’s Chinatown, the Chinese Hand Laundry Alliance campaigns for medical aid for China shortly before the 1949 revolution.

It helps that Buhle and Sullivan have a contagious appreciation for the humorous. They include a Socialist Party ash tray inviting you to tap your cigar above the slogan, “If you are working for OTHER people, read some books on SOCIALISM”; turn-of-the-century sheet music for the patriotic song, “There’s Red Enough in Our Flag for Me”; a 1913

cover of *The Progressive Dentist* featuring “The Coming Civilization and Dentistry’s Place in It,” by G.E. Hunt, M.D., D.D.S.; and an anarcho-communist caterpillar eating the nation’s luscious fruits in an 1886 caricature. My personal favorite is a “Little Lefty” cartoon, presumably from the ’30s, featuring a portly capitalist strolling through the park. A bird plops on the boss’s top hat, leading him to exclaim, “Ya dirty red!” To which a working-class kid, witness to it all, retorts, “Oh yeah? Well you’re all wet mister! Reds don’t b’lieve in individual acts of violence.”



Johnny Appleseed

One of the most creative chapters, born of the authors’ fondness for popular culture, is on red-diaper babies in the ’40s and ’50s. We see Paul Robeson on a visit to Camp Kinderland, a “Proletarian Camp” advertisement and covers of *New Pioneer*—faded icons of childhoods and adolescences past, when a now forgotten array of institutions and efforts helped pass on ideas of interracial solidarity and social justice to the children of the left.

Many readers may simply enjoy putting faces to notable names of more recent radical generations. There is a young James Weinstein, with thick-rimmed glasses, in the heyday of *Socialist Revolution*; a rather gruff-looking Hal Draper, bundled in an overcoat; a genial Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff sitting beneath a rack of copies of *Monthly Review*; American Indian activist Ward Churchill, cigarette dangling, leaning against the hood of his truck.

Not that *Images* is flawless. Some artists are not identified, many images are undated and a few captions are missing. In some cases, the quality of reproduction leaves a great deal to be desired. And one could second-guess the choices. Why three pictures of Terence V. Powderly, and none of Max Shachtman, Dwight Macdonald or Jesse Jackson? Why a full page on E. P. Thompson, a Brit? Why waste a precious color plate on an uninspired cover of *Capitalism Nature Socialism*?

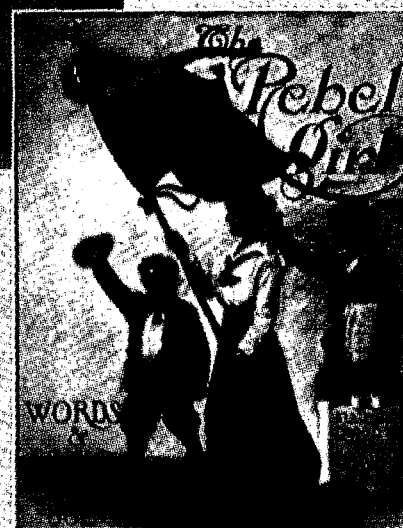
Ultimately, however, this would amount to so much niggling. *Images* is certain to instruct and delight, and it is offered at a bargain price, considering that it includes more than 70 color plates and an exceptional number of images.

Despite the efforts of know-nothing superpatriots to condemn radicals to shame and irrelevance, American radicalism has time and again shown itself to be a minority current advocating, against the entrenched powers of the status quo, transformations that later generations would take to be self-evidently just. And despite its failings, the American left’s multiracial and immigrant influences, its bright idealism and its global reach make it seem, oddly, more American than America itself. It would be too much to expect any book to explain these historical conundrums. But few raise them as successfully—or graphically—as *Images of American Radicalism*. ■

Christopher Phelps, author of *Young Sidney Hook* (Cornell University Press), is editorial director of *Monthly Review Press*.



Left: A campaign poster from Eugene V. Debs' 1904 presidential campaign. Below: The cover of the sheet music of *Rebel Girl*, Wobbly musician-composer-agitator Joe Hill's tribute to women labor activists. Bottom: Stylized "Wheel of Fortune" of the International Workers of the World.



America, the Radical

BY CHRISTOPHER PHELPS

It is the paradox of American radicalism as a political tradition that it has been forced by stigma and repression to struggle on the far-flung perimeters of the nation's experience, when it has, all the same, been at the very heart of that experience. Socialists, anarchists and communists are still regarded as anathemas or curiosities, if only because their grandest ambitions remain unrealized. But colonial revolutionaries, abolitionists, suffragists and civil rights activists, every bit as hounded and scorned as the reds in their day, are now widely praised. Today's conservatives worship at the shrines of yesterday's radicals.

Radicalism is "alien" to America, yet this land is our land. And rarely has this legacy been portrayed as colorfully as in Paul Buhle and Edmund B. Sullivan's new collection, *Images of American Radicalism* (Christopher Publishing House, \$60). A sheer pleasure and delight to thumb through, eclectic and inclusive in scope, *Images* is a wonder-filled catalogue of the American left's visual legacy.

The brainchild of Buhle, a prolific and ecumenical radical historian, and Sullivan, a Connecti-

cut museum curator, *Images* is a whirling kaleidoscope of pictures iconographic and obscure, surprising and expected, representative and strange. It features literally hundreds upon hundreds of photographs, paintings, leaflets, posters, comics, buttons and dust jackets—even neckties and ashtrays—giving vivid expression to radicalism's centrality in American culture and its simultaneous "un-American" status.

Perhaps no figure quite typifies that paradox like folk singer Woody Guthrie, who was steeped in the movement culture of Communism when he penned "This Land is Our Land," a clever riposte to "God Bless America" now routinely confused with the national anthem in grade schools. Appropriately enough, Guthrie makes more than one appearance in *Images*: in 1941, guitar slung over back, beneath the gateway of a Farm Security Administration facility near Bakersfield, Calif.; during the Second World War, with "This Machine Kills Fascists" inscribed on his guitar;

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